

2002P00503US
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The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for accommodating items, comprising:
 - a base for supporting said items, said base comprising walls defining an edge and a drop having an edge and a drop that define a ledge;
 - a first drive;
 - a first wall for providing rear lateral support to said items, said first wall functionally associated with said first drive such that when engaged said first drive causes said first wall to move in a lateral direction past edge;
 - a second drive;
 - a second wall for providing front lateral support, said second wall functionally associated with said second drive so as to move said second wall in response to an incoming item, and said second drive functionally associated with said first drive so as to move said second wall in concert with said first wall such that said items are pushed past said edge; and
 - a receiving area for accommodating said items, said area defined by cooperation of said first wall, said second wall, and said base.
2. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said second wall moves a further distance than said first wall.
3. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first wall and said second wall are substantially parallel.
4. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a conveyor belt comprising a plurality of walled sections, said sections positioned proximate to said edge and drop whereby items pushed past said edge drop from said receiving area and arrive within one of said sections in an order in which

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said items were received in said receiving area.

5. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said conveyor further comprises a roller track facilitating stacking of said items in said sections.

6. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said second drive is operable to maintain a select pressure between said second wall and said items.

7. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said items are stacked.

8. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said items are mail pieces.

9. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said items are stacked substantially perpendicular to said base.

10. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first and second wall are substantially perpendicular to said base.

11. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a stacking roller facilitating stacking of items between said first and second walls.

12. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a controller functionally associated with said first and second drives, said controller controlling drives so as to effect a select movement and moved distance of said first and second walls.

13. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising a level sensor functionally associated with said controller, said level

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sensor providing a signal when a select number of items or a select total items thickness is accommodated between said first and second walls.

14. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said signal is an empty signal causing said controller to engage said drives, move said first and second walls, and cause said items to drop off said edge and into one of said sections.

15. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein first and second drives further comprise means for driving said walls such that said items arrive within said section in essential a same formation as when said items were positioned in said receiving area.

16. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said conveyor line is inclined with respect to said first and second walls.

17. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said roller is substantially perpendicular to said conveyor belt.

18. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising a plurality of receiving areas, and wherein each of said plurality of sections is assigned to one of said plurality of receiving areas.

19. (previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said conveyor belt is idle until items from each of said receiving areas are deposited into sections.

20. (previously presented) A method for emptying a stacking tray, comprising the steps of:

- receiving items in a receiving area, said area defined by a first and second side driven lateral side wall and base running therebetween, said base further comprising walls defining an edge and a drop;
- moving said second wall laterally away from said first wall so as to

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accommodate newly arriving items in said receiving area;

- monitoring when a select number of items or total items thickness is accommodated within said receiving area;
- laterally displacing said first and second wall along said base such that items within said receiving area are pushed past said edge and caused to drop from said base when a preselect number of items or total thickness of items is monitored.

21. (previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein said step of moving said second wall further comprises the step of moving said second wall so as to maintain a select pressure upon items within said receiving area.

22. (previously presented) The method according to claim 21, further comprising the step of receiving said items dropped from said base in a section of a sectioned conveyor belt, said conveyor belt positioned below said base.

23. (previously presented) The method according to claim 22, wherein said belt comprises a plurality of sections, and said method further comprising the step of moving said conveyor belt after a select number of items have been deposited in a select number of sections.

24. (previously presented) The method according to claim 23, wherein said first and second walls are displaced such that said items drop into said sections in order of receipt at said receiving area and substantially undeformed.

25. (previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein said items are mail pieces.